DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 387 PS 026 544

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TITLE	Food Assistance: Child Care Centers Sponsored by Schools Participating in the National School Lunch Program.
INSTITUTION	General Accounting Office, Washington, DC. Resources, Community, and Economic Development Div.
REPORT NO	GAO/RCED-98-101R
PUB DATE	1998-03-03
NOTE	7p.
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 37050, Washington, DC 20013; phone: 202-512-6000; fax: 202-512-6061; World Wide Web: http.//www.gao.gov; e-mail: info@www.gao.gov (First copy, free; additional copies are $2 each. VISA and MasterCard accepted; 25% discount on orders for 100 or more copies).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Day Care Centers; Elementary Education; *Lunch Programs; National Surveys; School Age Day Care
IDENTIFIERS	*Child and Adult Care Food Program; Reauthorization Legislation; School Based Services; *School Lunch Program

ABSTRACT

In the process of reauthorizing child nutrition programs, Congress is considering a consolidation proposal to permit schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and also operate Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) outside-school-hours care centers to receive their federal reimbursement through NSLP for snacks provided in their centers. This telephone survey examined the number of CACFP centers that are operated by schools participating in the NSLP. Officials in 50 states and the District of Columbia provided information on the number of CACFP child care centers that were sponsored by schools participating in NSLP and those CACFP centers categorized specifically as outside-school-hours care centers, also sponsored by schools participating in NSLP. Findings indicated that about 80 percent of all CACFP child care centers had no affiliation with NSLP schools, with about 10 percent of the remaining CACFP centers sponsored by NSLP schools and 10 percent located in NSLP schools but sponsored by other organizations. For outside-school-hours CACFP centers, 36 percent had no affiliation with NSLP schools, about 30 percent were sponsored by NSLP schools, and about 35 percent were located in NSLP schools but were sponsored by other organizations. Less than 2 percent of the 88,900 schools participating in NSLP sponsored CACFP outside-school-hours care centers. (KB)

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B-279312

March 3, 1998

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate

Subject: Food Assistance: Child Care Centers Sponsored by Schools Participating in the National School Lunch Program

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Congress is in the process of reauthorizing several child nutrition programs. During this process, the Congress will consider proposals to consolidate certain aspects of the child care center component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Both programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. The child care center component of CACFP provides federal subsidies for the meals and snacks served to children in nonresidential child care centers. These centers may be sponsored and administered by a variety of organizations, including private nonprofit and public organizations. These organizations can include schools participating in NSLP. Some of the CACFP child care centers provide care for children during the hours when school is not in session and are referred to as outside-school-hours care centers.[1] NSLP provides federal subsidies for lunches served in approximately 88,900 schools.

One possible consolidation proposal involves permitting the schools that participate in NSLP and also operate CACFP outside-school-hours care centers to receive their federal reimbursement through NSLP for the snacks provided in

[1]CACFP outside-school-hours care centers must have as their main purpose the care and supervision of children.

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their centers.[2] Because no national data are available on the number of CACFP centers that are operated by the schools participating in NSLP, you asked us to develop such information.

To develop this information, we conducted a telephone survey of state-level CACFP officials. In our survey, we obtained information from officials in all 50 states and the District of Columbia on the number of (1) CACFP child care centers in the state that were sponsored by schools participating in NSLP and (2) those CACFP centers categorized as outside-school-hours care centers that were sponsored by schools participating in NSLP. In addition, we obtained information on the number of CACFP child care centers and CACFP outside-school-hours centers that were located in schools but were sponsored by other organizations, such as parent-teacher associations or local recreation departments. Table 1 summarizes the information we collected from these officials.

Table 1: CACFP Child Care Centers, by Affiliation With NSLP Schools

Type of CACFP child care center	All CACFP child care centers		Outside-school-hours CACFP centers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Centers sponsored by NSLP schools	3,142	9.6	1,240	29.3
Centers located in NSLP schools but sponsored by other organizations	3,266	10.0	1,469	34.7
Centers with no affiliation with NSLP schools[a]	26,195	80.3	1,524	36
Total CACFP centers	**32,603**	**100**	**4,233**	**100**

Note: Our survey requested information for the September or October 1997 time frame. Because data were sometimes unavailable for this period, some states

[2]Currently, this type of reimbursement arrangement is allowed only for NSLP schools that had CACFP centers as of May 15, 1989. This consolidation proposal would change or eliminate the date by which these schools needed to have CACFP centers in order to receive reimbursements through NSLP. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in fiscal year 1997, only four schools claimed NSLP reimbursement for snacks for after-school care.

provided estimates or information that were based on slightly earlier or later time frames.

[a]"Centers with no affiliation with NSLP schools" represents the difference between the total number of CACFP centers less the number of centers sponsored by NSLP schools and the number of centers located in NSLP schools but sponsored by other organizations.

It is important to note that we found that a very small percentage of all NSLP schools, less than 2 percent of the approximately 88,900 schools participating in NSLP, sponsor CACFP outside-school-hours care centers.[3]

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We performed our work from December 1997 through February 1998 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. We did not independently verify the data that state officials provided on the numbers of CACFP child care centers.

We provided a draft of this report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for its review and comment. We discussed the report with Food and Nutrition Service officials, including the Director of Child Nutrition Programs. The Service concurred with the accuracy of the report and provided several minor clarifications, which we incorporated as appropriate.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 14 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture; the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Education and the Workforce; the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Agriculture; and the Secretary of Agriculture. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

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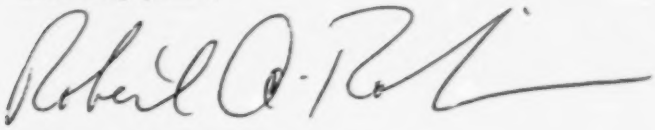
[3]CACFP child care centers are available to children age 12 and under. Children of migrant workers and children with handicaps are eligible for these centers through age 15. As a result, some of the 88,900 NSLP schools include high schools that generally serve a student population that would not otherwise qualify for CACFP center benefits.

Major contributors to this report were Thomas Slomba, Judy Hoovler, and Patricia Yorkman. Please contact me at (202) 512-5138 if you or your staff have any questions.

Sincerely yours,



Robert A. Robinson
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